


American Citizen Newsletter - Volume 2: June 2006

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Farewell to Bill Bartlett

We bid farewell to U.S. Embassy New Delhi consular chief William M. Bartlett and his wife Christina “Tina” Bartlett who will be leaving India this month. Bill and Tina arrived in India in 2002. In his job as Consul General, Bill Bartlett oversees the entire consular operation at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, as well as the consulates in Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta. Bill has had previous assignments with the Department of State in Washington, DC, Germany, the United Kingdom, Nigeria and El Salvador. Bill’s next position will be at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. We wish Bill and Tina the greatest success in the future, and thank Bill for his incredible contribution to the consular operation in India. Bill’s job was particularly challenging since demand for U.S. visas and American citizen services in India is growing faster than at almost any other location in the world!

Bill’s replacement expects to arrive in India in August, and we will introduce him in our next newsletter. Until then, Richard M. Sherman will serve as consular chief in New Delhi.

2006 Federal Elections

Now is the time to request your absentee ballot for the 2006 U.S. Federal Elections scheduled for Tuesday, November 7, 2006. Every seat in the U.S. House of Representatives will be at stake, as well as one-third of the seats in the U.S. Senate. There are many important state and local races as well. Here are some handy questions and answers to help you to vote this year:

Q1. How do I request an absentee ballot?

A1. You can fill in a form called the Federal Post-Card Application, which is available at the Embassy’s American Citizen Services Unit, or can be easily downloaded at www.fvap.gov (click on “Forms”). You must mail it to the local election official in for your U.S. voting address. That information is also available at www.fvap.gov. The Embassy’s American Citizen Services Unit has a book that lists voting procedures and addresses for every voting jurisdiction. Please call us or stop by, and we can help make sure your request for a ballot is prepared and sent properly. Another handy tool appears at www.overseasvotersfoundation.org which automatically prepares your ballot request and provides an address based on information you enter.

Q2. What if I am not registered?

A2. Your request for an absentee ballot in most cases also constitutes a request to be registered to vote.

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Q3. What if I don't have a U.S. address?

A3. If you don't have a permanent U.S. address, you may still vote using the last address where you resided in the United States.

Q4. If I voted in 2004, won't I automatically receive an absentee ballot?

A4. You should, but there are 3,000 different voting jurisdictions in the United States and nobody's perfect. It doesn't hurt to send in an absentee ballot request. Better safe than sorry!

Q5. Do I have to mail the ballot request myself?

A5. You can mail it yourself, or the Embassy will mail it for you. We have special postage-paid envelopes for this purpose. Note that this is the only kind of mail that the Embassy will mail for you, so take advantage of it!

Make sure your vote counts. Do not procrastinate. Order your absentee ballot today!

Independence Day Celebration in New Delhi

All American citizens living in or visiting India are invited to attend the Independence Day celebration at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.

Date: Saturday, 1 July 2006

Time: 6:00 p.m. - midnight (no admittance after 9:00 p.m.)

Place: ACSA ball field (entrance at Gate E, the "ACSA Gate," on Panchsheel Marg across from New Sikkim House, in the Chanakya Puri neighborhood, New Delhi)

Price: Rs. 150 per person (children under 5 admitted for free); special "family tickets" available for Rs. 500

Gates will open at 5:30 p.m. A formal presentation, including welcoming remarks from Ambassador David C. Mulford, will

take place from 7:00-7:30 p.m. Entry to the ACSA ball field will be restricted during this presentation, so please arrive early! There will be games, fireworks, special commemorative T-shirts for sale, and more! Those attending will be able to purchase coupons for food and drinks.

Admission Guidelines: This party is open ONLY to American citizens and their immediate family members. An "immediate" family member means (i) for American citizen adults, your spouse and children, or (ii) for American citizen minors, your parents and brothers & sisters. Unfortunately, extended family members such as cousins, aunts & uncles, grandparents, etc. who are not American citizens are not permitted to attend this party.

Tickets & RSVP Instructions: Tickets are available for purchase in advance at the American Center (24 Kasturba Gandhi Marg, near Connaught Place, New Delhi), the American Citizen Services Unit at the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section (enter at Gate 6 on Nyaya Marg) or at ACSA (ACSA members only please). You can also buy tickets at the door, but ONLY if you R.S.V.P. in advance by sending the following information for each member of your family group via e-mail to trucooking@yahoo.com or acsnd@state.gov no later than Wednesday, June 28:

- * Name
- * Nationality
- * Passport number
- * If you are not an American citizen, your relationship to the American in your group

Questions? Ask Betsy or Mukesh by calling 011 2419-8316, or by writing to trucooking@yahoo.com or acsnd@state.gov.

Outbreak of Chikungunya Fever in Several South Indian States

The local media has reported an outbreak of Chikungunya fever (also known as CHIKV) in several Indian states including Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra in the last year. The disease, which is spread through the bite of an infected mosquito, typically produces flu-like symptoms including severe headache, chills, fever (40° C, 104°F), joint pain, nausea, and vomiting. Most patients recover within 3-5 days. There is currently no vaccine for the disease. Chikungunya virus is highly infective and disabling but is not transmissible between people.

The recommended treatment for Chikungunya fever is rest, fluids, ibuprofen, naproxen, acetaminophen, or paracetamol which may relieve symptoms of fever and aching. Aspirin should be avoided. In addition, a person with Chikungunya fever or dengue should limit their exposure to mosquito bites in order to avoid further spreading the infection and remain indoors under a mosquito net. For further information, please refer to the Centers for Disease Control website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/Chikungunya/chickvfact.htm>

Preventative Measures

As is the case with all mosquito born diseases, people are advised to:

- Avoid areas where there is stagnant water, which are the breeding ground for disease carrying mosquitoes;
- Use insect repellent containing a DEET or another EPA-registered active ingredient on exposed skin;
- To wear long sleeves and pants when venturing out of doors;
- Have secure screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes out;
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites by emptying standing water from flower pots, buckets and barrels;
- Change water in pet dishes and replace water in bird baths weekly;

- Drill holes in tire swings so water drains out;
- Keep children's wading pools empty and on their sides when not in use.

Avian Influenza Update

India has experienced three outbreaks of avian influenza in poultry in February and March of this year. The outbreaks occurred in rural areas of the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. In each case, the Government of India ordered the culling of tens of thousands of birds. The government has reported that the H5N1 avian influenza virus was contained in each of those outbreaks, and that no other outbreaks have been reported. There have been no reports of any human cases of the H5N1 virus in India so far. To keep abreast of this changing situation, you are encouraged to periodically check the Embassy website at <http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov>, and click on "Avian Influenza Update" on the right-hand side of the page. In certain cases, we will be sending warden messages regarding avian influenza, if the situation so warrants. That site contains a series of Questions and Answers that can help you and your family prepare for a possible influenza pandemic.

Consular Information Sheet for India

The Consular Information Sheet for India was recently updated. The Consular Information Sheet provides the U.S. Government's analysis of important information for travelers to India, including visa information, security, health, crime, etc. You are encouraged to consult the Consular Information Sheet, and to share it with your family or friends who plan to visit India to ensure that common sense precautions are taken when traveling around the country.

The Consular Information Sheets for India and Bhutan are available on the Consulate website at <http://chennaiusconsulate.gov>. Consular Information Sheets for every country in the world are available on the

U.S. State Department's travel website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

Income Tax Changes for Expats

Congress recently enacted important tax legislation. Although most attention was paid to the extension of certain previously-enacted tax cuts that were scheduled to expire, additional changes were included in the legislation of interest to Americans living and working overseas. For example, the amount of earned income that can be excluded by most Americans working overseas was increased. However, favorable treatment of certain other types of compensation provided to expats, such as housing provided by an employer, was restricted. These tax changes are retroactive to January 1 of this year. Interesting articles on these tax changes have appeared in major newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal and the International Herald Tribune. See, for example, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/05/26/news/ataxes.php>. More information may be obtained from the IRS website at:

Precautions to be Taken During Demonstrations

The Consulate's Regional Security Office wishes to remind American citizens that demonstrations in India often occur spontaneously and can escalate with little warning thus, posing safety risks to bystanders as well as participants. American citizens should monitor news reports regarding the location of protests and modify movements accordingly. Please report violent disturbances to the Regional Security Office or American Citizen Services immediately so that warnings can be issued if appropriate. Both offices can be reached by calling the Consulate at 044 2857 4000.

Sometimes these demonstrations turn violent. An advisory will be issued by the Consulate if information is received that indicates American interests are being specifically targeted.

American citizens should take the following precautions:

- Be alert, cautious, and be prepared for demonstrations to suddenly occur;
- If caught up in a demonstration, take the quickest route that leads away from the crowd;
- Report the location of violent demonstrations to the Regional Security Office or to American Citizen Services as soon as possible.

FBI Fights Cyber Crime

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) is a reporting and referral system for Internet crime complaints from people in the United States and around the world. Through an online complaint form and a team of agents and analysts, IC3 serves the public and U.S. and international law enforcement agencies investigating Internet crime. Internet crime, also called cyber crime, is any illegal activity arising from one or more Internet components, such as Web sites, chat rooms, or e-mail. Cyber crime can include everything from non-delivery of goods or services and computer intrusions (hacking) to intellectual property rights abuses, economic espionage (theft of trade secrets), online extortion, international money laundering, identity theft, and a growing list of other Internet-facilitated offenses.

Today at the IC3 office in Fairmont, West Virginia, six federal agents and approximately 40 analysts from industry and academia receive Internet-related criminal complaints from the public, then research, develop, and refer the complaints to federal, state, local, and international law enforcement or regulatory agencies and multi-agency task forces for investigation. Through an IC3 Web site (www.ic3.gov), people from all over the world can file complaints about Internet crime. IC3 sometimes helps law enforcement agencies by researching and building the initial case.

A growing group of international agencies are involved in fighting cyber crime. The IC3 works with law enforcement officials in many countries, including Australia and the United Kingdom. IC3 representatives also attend periodic meetings of the G8 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom) Subgroup on High-Tech Crime, part of which works to combat cyber crime and enhance cyber investigations.

The IC3 and the CIRFU projects are a constantly evolving work in progress. Along the way, IC3 agents and analysts revisit what is working and what is not working, and constantly seek out experts and sources of intelligence to get smarter about cyber crime and learn how to more effectively fight it.

ACS Location and Hours

The Consulate General's American Citizen Services unit is open to the public Monday through Friday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 Noon and 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., except on Indian and American holidays. Please enter the U.S. Consulate at the main gate on Cathedral Road. You must present your valid passport or other form of government-issued photo identification to gain access to American Citizen Services.

All ACS services are on a walk-in basis - no appointment is required. Our busiest days are Mondays and the day following a holiday. For fastest service, we recommend avoiding these peak work periods. If you are coming in to document your child as a U.S. citizen, we urge you to complete the Consular Report of Birth application before appearing at the Consulate in order to save time. Please contact us for an application packet.

The U.S. Government requires us to charge a fee for many of our services. A copy of

the fee schedule is available at:

http://travel.state.gov/about/info/customer/customer_313.html

Fees may be paid in cash in either U.S. dollars or Indian rupees or by rupee demand draft made payable to U.S. Consulate Chennai. The Consulate does not accept payment by credit card, bank debit card, by personal check or by traveler's check. We encourage you to bring exact change for your transactions.

ACS cannot entertain visa questions. American citizens only may discuss visa questions with someone at the Visa Information Unit inquiry counter daily, except on the last Friday of each month, between the hours of 3:00-3:30 p.m. To avail of this service, please enter the Consulate at the visa gate on Mount Road.

ACS is available outside of these hours for emergency services. To contact us, call (044) 2857 4000. You can also e-mail us at chennaics@state.gov.

Upcoming Consulate Holidays

The Consulate will be closed for official holidays on:

- July 4 (U.S. Independence Day)
- August 15 (Indian Independence Day)
August 16 (Krishna Jayanthi)
- September 4 (U.S. Labor Day)

Recorded Information on ACS Services Available

Please remember that information about our services and their requirements, including fees, is now available 24-hours a day by calling 044 2857 4000 and going to the American Citizen Services menu. Considerable effort has gone into making this a useful tool, particularly for those who do not have computer access and look forward to receiving your feedback on this new service.